

**Amendments to the Claims**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1.- 43. (cancelled)

44. (new)      A process for making a metallic substrate having a vitreous coating, wherein the process comprises

- (a)      applying an alkali metal silicate-containing coating sol to the substrate to provide a coating layer on the substrate; and
- (b)      thermally densifying the coating layer of (a) by a two-stage heat treatment comprising,
  - (i) in a first stage, a heat treatment carried out either (A) in an oxygen-containing atmosphere or (B) in a vacuum at a residual pressure of  $\leq 15$  mbar, and
  - (ii) in a second stage, a heat treatment in a low-oxygen atmosphere up to full densification with formation of a vitreous layer.

45. (new)      The process of claim 44, wherein the heat treatment of the first stage is carried out according to alternative (A) at an end temperature of up to about 400°C.

46. (new)      The process of claim 45, wherein the oxygen-containing atmosphere comprises from 15 % to 90 % by volume of oxygen.

47. (new) The process of claim 44, wherein the heat treatment of the first stage is carried out according to alternative (B) at an end temperature of up to about 500°C.

48. (new) The process of claim 47, wherein the heat treatment is carried out at an end temperature of up to about 200°C and at a residual pressure of  $\leq 5$  mbar.

49. (new) The process of claim 44, wherein the heat treatment of the second stage is carried out at an end temperature in a range of from 400° to 600°C.

50. (new) The process of claim 49, wherein the heat treatment of the second stage is carried out at an end temperature in a range of from 540° to 560°C and in an atmosphere which comprises  $\leq 0.5$  % by volume of oxygen.

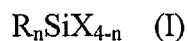
51. (new) The process of claim 49, wherein the heat treatment of the second stage is carried out in an inert gas atmosphere.

52. (new) The process of claim 44, wherein the process further comprises cooling the heat-treated substrate at a cooling rate of from 1 to 10 K/min.

53. (new) The process of claim 44, wherein (b) is preceded by a drying of the applied coating layer.

P30123.A03

54. (new) The process of claim 44, wherein the alkali metal silicate-containing coating sol is obtainable by a process comprising a hydrolysis and polycondensation of one or more silanes of formula (I)



wherein the radicals X independently represent hydrolyzable groups or hydroxyl groups, the radicals R independently represent hydrogen, alkyl, alkenyl and alkynyl groups having up to 4 carbon atoms and aryl, aralkyl and alkaryl groups having from 6 to 10 carbon atoms, and n is 0, 1 or 2, with the proviso that at least one silane where n = 1 or 2 is used,

or oligomers derived therefrom,

in the presence of

- (a) at least one compound selected from oxides and hydroxides of alkali metals and alkaline earth metals, and
- (b) optionally, nanoscale SiO<sub>2</sub> particles.

55. (new) The process of claim 54, wherein the at least one compound is used in such an amount that an atomic ratio Si : (alkali metal and/or alkaline earth metal) is in a range of from 20:1 to 7:1.

56. (new) A process for making a metallic substrate having a vitreous coating, wherein the process comprises

- (a) applying an alkali metal silicate-containing coating sol to the substrate to provide a coating

layer on the substrate;

(b) drying the applied coating layer at room temperature or elevated temperature to obtain a dried coating layer, and

(c) thermally densifying the dried coating layer of (b) by a two-stage heat treatment comprising,

- (i) in a first stage, a heat treatment carried out either (A) in an oxygen-containing atmosphere or (B) in a vacuum at a residual pressure of  $\leq 15$  mbar, and
- (ii) in a second stage, a heat treatment in a low-oxygen atmosphere up to full densification with formation of a vitreous layer.

57. (new) The process of claim 56, wherein (b) is carried out at a temperature of up to 100°C.

58. (new) The process of claim 56, wherein (b) is carried out at a temperature of up to 80°C.

59. (new) The process of claim 56, wherein the heat treatment of the first stage is carried out according to alternative (A) at an end temperature of up to about 400°C.

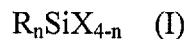
60. (new) The process of claim 59, wherein the oxygen-containing atmosphere comprises from 15 % to 90 % by volume of oxygen.

61. (new) The process of claim 56, wherein the heat treatment of the first stage is carried out according to alternative (B) at an end temperature of up to about 500°C.

62. (new) The process of claim 61, wherein the heat treatment is carried out at an end temperature of up to about 200°C and at a residual pressure of  $\leq 5$  mbar.
63. (new) The process of claim 56, wherein the heat treatment of the second stage is carried out at an end temperature in a range of from 400° to 600°C.
64. (new) The process of claim 63, wherein the heat treatment of the second stage is carried out at an end temperature in a range of from 540° to 560°C and in an atmosphere which comprises  $\leq 0.5$  % by volume of oxygen.
65. (new) The process of claim 63, wherein the heat treatment of the second stage is carried out in an inert gas atmosphere.
66. (new) The process of claim 56, wherein in the second stage a residence time at a maximum temperature is from 20 to 60 minutes.
67. (new) The process of claim 56, wherein the process further comprises cooling the heat-treated substrate at a cooling rate of from 1 to 10 K/min.
68. (new) The process of claim 56, wherein the alkali metal silicate-containing coating sol is obtainable by a process comprising a hydrolysis and polycondensation of one or more silanes of

P30123.A03

formula (I)



wherein the radicals X independently represent hydrolyzable groups or hydroxyl groups, the radicals R independently represent hydrogen, alkyl, alkenyl and alkynyl groups having up to 4 carbon atoms and aryl, aralkyl and alkaryl groups having from 6 to 10 carbon atoms, and n is 0, 1 or 2, with the proviso that at least one silane where n = 1 or 2 is used,  
or oligomers derived therefrom,

in the presence of

- (a) at least one compound selected from oxides and hydroxides of alkali metals and alkaline earth metals, and
- (b) optionally, nanoscale SiO<sub>2</sub> particles.

69. (new) The process of claim 68, wherein the at least one compound is used in such an amount that an atomic ratio Si : (alkali metal and/or alkaline earth metal) is in a range of from 20:1 to 7:1.

70. (new) The process of claim 69, wherein the atomic ratio is from 15:1 to 10:1.

71. (new) The process of claim 70, wherein an average value of n in the silanes of formula (I) is from 0.2 to 1.5.

P30123.A03

72. (new) The process of claim 71, wherein the average value of  $n$  is from 0.5 to 1.0.
73. (new) The process of claim 44, wherein a thickness of the vitreous layer is from 2.5 to 4.5  $\mu\text{m}$ .
74. (new) The process of claim 44, wherein the substrate has been subjected to a cold forming.
75. (new) The process of claim 44, wherein the substrate has a structured surface.
76. (new) The process of claim 44, wherein the substrate comprises at least one of steel, stainless steel, zinc-plated steel, chromium-plated steel and enameled steel.